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SUBJECT: EUCOM DCDR GENERAL CHARLES WALD DISCUSSES SECURITY ISSUES WITH KAZAKHSTAN'S MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND WITH THE DIRECTOR OF BORDER GUARD FORCES

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM MARK L. ASQUINO, FOR REASONS: 1.4
(A),(B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Deputy Commander of the US European Command (EUCOM) General Charles F. Wald had separate meetings on January 20 with Minister of Defense General Mukhtar Altynbayev and Lieutenant General Bolat Zakiyev, Director of the Border Guards (BG) Service. At the Ministry of Defense (MOD), military briefers gave presentations on the current status and future plans in the Caspian area as well as on military cooperation with the U.S. and NATO. In the meeting at Border Guard (BG) headquarters, Caspian security was also the focus of discussion. There was a disconnect in the two meetings between the Ministry of Defense's advocacy of a modern Kazakhsani naval force on the Caspian, and the Border's Guard's view that no such force is necessary. End summary.

MOD Links Political and Economic Stability with Military Reform

¶2. (SBU) After introducing his staff, General Altynbayev noted that Kazakhstan had just completed presidential elections, had a new government, new prime minister and new cabinet ministers. He said he was pleased with his reappointment as the Minister of Defense. General Altynbayev went on to say that the real successes in Kazakhstan's economic development and its stable government had set the stage for ongoing military reforms. He concluded that military cooperation with the U.S., other countries, and NATO enhances military reform. The five year plan of military cooperation with the U.S. is considered important to the improvement of Kazakhstan's forces, especially the air mobile, navy, Caspian region forces and the Kazakhstani Battalion (KAZBAT).

¶3. (C) General Altynbayev also said that U.S. assistance in developing the Caspian force infrastructure, including two UH-II helicopters, armament and naval forces is very important. Measures to support peace and security in the Caspian region are critical for stability in the region.

Kazakhstan Needs a Navy

¶4. (SBU) In the briefings that followed, there was emphasis on the scale of Caspian Sea exploitation over the past few years, and the need to develop a multi-functional security apparatus to protect the eastern Caspian area. A centerpiece of the latter is development of naval maritime forces to cooperate with the existing maritime border guard forces, as well as counter-terrorism, anti-aircraft and aviation forces. Sourcing of vessels was pointed out as an issue in developing a naval maritime force. The training role of the naval institute was described, and it was pointed out that naval forces operate under the western regional command. The various types of ships envisioned as a total naval force were listed. The mission roles of guarding the border, economic interests, deterring attacks, defending territorial waters and ports, escorting vessels, search and rescue, cooperation with joint defense operations and ecological accident control were delineated.

Cooperation with the U.S. and NATO

¶5. (SBU) The second briefing provided an overview of military cooperation with the U.S., including types of training, equipping and infrastructure development that has already occurred or is planned. Important areas highlighted were the development of a counter-terrorism capability, infrastructure development in the Caspian region and equipping units. Other long-term plans include NATO compatibility for KZ forces, enhancing the capabilities of the mountain infantry battalion in the southern military region, professional development of the NCO corps and reform of the military vehicle maintenance

system.

¶6. (SBU) The last briefing described Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO through the planning and review process (PARP) of the NATO partnership for peace (PFP) program. This cooperation includes interoperability exercises, visitor programs, PFP funded weapons destruction programs, and support to the NATO liaison officer.

How EUCOM Can Help

¶7. (C) Following the briefings, General Wald discussed the role he saw for EUCOM in working with Kazakhstan to help it develop its Caspian security capability. He also noted EUCOM's interest in facilitating cooperation among Caspian neighbor states. The General described how the U.S. is working with both the border guards and the navy in Azerbaijan. U.S. assistance has included surveillance radars, other equipment and training, and may include training on command and control and doctrine in the future. This will help Azerbaijan integrate its forces and procedures to detect and react to territorial threats.

¶8. (C) General Altynbayev noted that unlike Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan has just started Caspian forces development. This is why MOD maritime capability does not yet exist, and why continued U.S. assistance is so crucial. He said that ground and air forces capabilities recently have been established in the Caspian port city of Aktau in western Kazakhstan. Two exercises have been conducted in this region, but only with the use of deployed forces. He reiterated that the existing problem is the lack of ships, although three South Korean patrol boats will be delivered to Kazakhstani forces in Turkey in March. The General added that Russia has agreed to provide two ships, but no date of availability has been established. He thanked General Wald for US assistance with facilities in the Caspian region. He added that there are no disputes between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In response to a question on joint operations, General Altynbayev said that he is working on possible future cooperation with Azerbaijan, most likely in the area of training.

Border Guard Forces

¶9. (SBU) In a separate meeting, General Wald also discussed security cooperation in the Caspian Sea area with General Bolat Zakiyev, Director of the Border Guards (BG) Service. General Zakiyev noted that Kazakhstan has 2000 kilometers of coastline on the Caspian Sea, which is more than any of the other Caspian Basin countries. The BG's operating area includes oil and fishing regions, plus maritime transport routes from Turkmenistan and Iran. Among the BG's responsibilities are drug interdiction, addressing the problems of illegal immigration and poaching, plus providing oil infrastructure security. The fact that Caspian water borders have not been officially delineated among the Caspian Basin countries greatly complicates performing these duties.

¶10. (C) General Zakiyev continued that the Maritime Border Guard (MBG) Division is located in the port city of Aktau. It has 24 maritime vessels, a mixed aviation unit of helicopter and fixed wing, a BG coastal unit and border control operations at Kazakhstan's ports and airports. The BG also provides security for a nuclear energy plant located near the coast. Zakiyev noted that Kazakhstan had good cooperation with Azerbaijan and Russia in Caspian security. Turkmenistan's declared policy of "neutrality" complicates its participation in such cooperation and Iran resisted any cooperation until the Caspian border status was decided.

Upcoming Meeting on Caspian Cooperation

¶11. (C) General Zakiyev said that Azerbaijan, Russia, and Kazakhstan planned to unite BG efforts in a trilateral agreement. In mid-February in Atyrau, the heads of the three BG agencies would sign an agreement on Caspian coordination and cooperation. He added that "other countries" (Note: a probable reference to Turkmenistan) might also participate with material or information assistance, even if not officially a part of the agreement. He concluded that these steps are being taken for the purpose of mutual security, even though not final or ideal, due to limited resources.

¶12. (C) Regarding Kazakhstan's maritime capabilities, Zakiyev said that in 2003, the BG started equipping units with radar that could detect out to 60 kilometers from the coast. At present, only 600 kilometers of the coast had coverage, but the entire coast should be equipped with

radar coverage by the end of 2006, operating on a 24 hour basis. The next task was to improve radio equipment and communication, with future plans for video surveillance, including aviation video systems.

13.(C) General Wald asked if Kazakhstani BG radios were interoperable with those of the Azerbaijani BG. General Zakiyev acknowledged that they were not currently interoperable, but that the two countries exchanged Caspian security information. He said that at the February meeting, the two countries were expected to agree on measures for greater cooperation.

Who Needs a Navy?

14. (C) General Wald asked about BG cooperation with Kazakhstan's Navy. General Zakiyev replied that, in principle, the Navy had a different mission than the Border Guard. However, he observed dryly that he hoped there would never be the need for a Kazakhstani naval force on the Caspian. He said the reason was that no Kazakhstani navy was required because the Caspian is a demilitarized area. According to Kazakhstani law, the Navy's mission was only to provide security for ships beyond Kazakhstan's 12 mile maritime border limit on the Caspian. He implied there was no great need for such security.

15. (C) General Wald asked how far the BG's control extended from the coastline. General Zakiyev replied that the BG operates up to 12 miles out, and controls the entire coast line. He also noted that since the water borders are not delineated among the countries, the February meeting will also serve to discuss coordination against criminal activities, rather than settle on official border activities.

16. (C) In a final question, General Wald asked if video signal equipment would feed information into an electronic map showing all vessels on the Caspian. General Zakiyev said that Kazakhstan might install such a system during the next year if funding is available.

17. (C) Comment: There was a disconnect between the Ministry of Defense's robust advocacy of a modern, Kazakhstani naval force on the Caspian, and the Border's Guard's view that no such force is needed. Border Guard head Zakiyev took the position that his organization has primary responsibility for maritime security in the Caspian. Based on the meetings, there appears to be greater cooperation between Kazakhstan and its neighbors on Caspian security than between its MOD and BG on the subject. End Comment.

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